



AIR WAR COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT

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ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE: EFFECTS ON THE AIR FORCE

By LT COL ROBERT O. BREWER

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ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE:
EFFECTS ON THE AIR FORCE

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel Hans Asmus

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: All Volunteer Force: Effects on the Air Force

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Remarks on historical background of conscription introduce the concept of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) and the doubts that arose at its inception. Quantity of personnel enlisting, quality of the enlistees and demographic make-up of the enlisted force serve as parameters for the discussion, which determines if the AVF has adversely affected the Air Force enlisted accessions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Robert O. Brewer (MS Ed., University of Southern California) enlisted in the Air Force in 1957 and served in several specialties, culminating as the Wing Sergeant Major, 22nd Bombardment Wing (SAC), March Air Force Base, California. He entered Officer Training School in 1970 and was a distinguished graduate. He then commanded the Headquarters Squadron Section, Barksdale AFB, Louisiana from 1970 to 1974. He was selected as the Air Force Executive Support Officer of the Year in 1973. At Kadena AB, Japan he was the Base Executive Officer from 1974 to 1976. He served as Air Officer Commanding, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado from 1976 to 1978 and as Executive to the Commandant, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama from 1978 to 1980. He commanded the 3550th Recruiting Squadron, Indianapolis, Indiana from 1981 to 1985. Colonel Brewer is a graduate of the Air War College, Class of 1986.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

During President Nixon's presidential campaign in 1968, he pledged to end the draft once our involvement in Vietnam was behind us. He argued that there were significant changes in conditions since the initiation of the draft prior to World War II, that there were gross inequities in the existing draft system, and the draft was in fundamental opposition to the principles of individual liberty upon which the United States was founded. [1:603] He pointed out that the kind of war we would have to be prepared for in the future would include not only conventional and nuclear war but guerrilla war such as that fought in Vietnam. It would require professional, well-trained forces. He also showed graphically that only 40 per cent of our eligible young people ever served. By 1972, the last year of the draft, three induction notices had to be sent in order to get one draftee. Many men chose to leave the country rather than face conscription. Parents were supporting their decisions. In June 1973, President Nixon delivered on his pledge by initiating the All-Volunteer Force.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Many of our government officials, military leaders, and educators felt strongly that an All-Volunteer Force would never work and that it would adversely affect mission accomplishment and national security. It was their opinion that the services would be unable to get the quantity, quality, and representation necessary. They were fearful the armed services would be comprised of the poor, with most recruits coming from the South.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This research study only covers Air Force enlisted accessions and deals specifically with quantity, quality, and demographic make-up.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) -- A test required by the Department of Defense for individuals wishing to enlist in the military services. This test yields a percentile score which is then translated into a mental ability level.

A. Category I -- The highest mental ability level designated by the AFQT. Category I represents those who are between 93 and 99 on the percentile scale.

B. Category II -- The second level of mental ability designated by the AFQT. This level represents those who are between 65 and 92 percentile.

C. Category III -- The third level of mental ability designated by the AFQT. This category represents those who are between 31 and 64 percentile.

D. Category IV -- The lowest level of mental ability designated by the AFQT. This category represents those who are between 10 and 30 percentile, and it is the lowest level accepted by the military.

E. Category V -- Those who are between 0 and 9 on the percentile scale. These people are ineligible for military service.

2. Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) -- A test which yields four composite aptitude scores: mechanical, administrative, general, and electronics. The scores are used to determine qualification in various career fields.

3. Demographic Make-Up -- The representativeness of the Air Force. It includes such things as sex, race, and geographic distribution.

4. Quality -- The mental ability of enlistees determined by scores on the AFQT, ASVAB, and by educational level.

5. Quantity -- The actual numbers of individuals in the Air Force.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this author's research are to analyze, assess, and articulate the effects of the All-Volunteer Force on Air Force (AVF) enlisted accessions by comparing those who enlisted in the draft era, 1971-1973, with those in the volunteer era, 1981-1983. The author will use three specific areas for measurement: quantity, quality, and demographic make-up. Chapter Two covers the historical background of conscription. Chapter Three examines the quantity and quality of the Air Force enlisted accessions before and after the conversion to the AVF. The quantity of the enlistees will include a comparison of the number of volunteers and percentage of accomplishment. Attrition, desertion, and retention are key elements and will also be discussed. The quality of the Air Force enlisted force consists of a comparison of scores of enlisted accessions on the Armed Forces Qualification Test, the Armed Services Aptitude Battery Test, and high school diploma graduates. Chapter Four addresses the demographic make-up of the enlisted force as shown by geographic representation, female

accessions, and black accessions. In Chapter Five, a summary and conclusions are given.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of conscription goes back to feudal times. People were owned and expected to serve their lords or masters. If they were owned, then they were there to be used or disposed of as determined by their owners. We trace current history to the Roman Empire and the institutions called patrocinium and precarium, and to a related idea held by the German barbarians, the of the posse comitatus. This later became part of post-feudal English law. In 1626, it was translated from Latin as "the force of the country...the body of men above the age of fifteen in a county (exclusive of peers, clergymen, and infirm persons) whom the sheriff may summon or raise to repress a riot or for other purposes." [1:6] In the 1700's and early 1800's the British used this same tradition in applying a system of draft to crew its naval ships. In 1777, Massachusetts and Virginia instituted compulsory military service to pursue the values laid out in our Declaration of Independence. Posse comitatus was so assumed to entail the obligation of the citizen to the state that George Washington wrote to the President of the Continental Congress in 1778 encouraging drafting

the people for the military. The first to apply the modern principle of posse comitatus was Napoleon Bonaparte. All men between eighteen and twenty-five were required to serve with certain deferments and exemptions authorized. He drafted 25,000 men per month. From 1789 until 1940 -- the first 151 years of our nation's history -- draft laws were in force for only a total of four years: once during the Civil War, and once during World War I. [1:30,31]

Conscription as we know it came into being on May 18, 1917, when President Woodrow Wilson directed that all males between the ages of 21 and 30 must register for the draft.[1:31] We continued conscription until June, 1973, when under President Nixon's direction we began the All-Volunteer-Force. He cited a significant change in conditions since the initiation of the draft just before World War II, inequities in the existing draft system, and the fundamental opposition of the draft to the principles of individual liberty upon which our country was founded, all of which necessitated a change from the draft to volunteer service.[1:604]

CHAPTER THREE

THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF AIR FORCE ENLISTED ACCESSIONS

QUANTITY

The Air Force has met its goals for enlisted accessions consistently. The author believes this success can be attributed to better pay, significant increases in use of women by better recruiting practices and opening more career fields to them, more Blacks qualifying for jobs, a strong feeling of patriotism, and strong support by the President, Congress, and the American people. Table I shows the goals for male and female accessions and the actual numbers and percentages achieved.[2]

GOALS AND ACTUAL NUMBERS OF ACCESSIONS

Years	Males		Females		Total		Pct
	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Actual</u>	
1971	93,432	91,312	3,941	4,290	97,373	95,602	98.2
1972	81,241	81,837	4,500	4,500	85,741	86,337	100.2
1973	87,805	87,805	6,172	6,172	93,977	93,977	100.0
1981	65,943	65,961	10,957	10,957	76,900	76,918	100.02
1982	58,773	58,793	8,745	8,745	67,518	67,538	100.03
1983	51,606	51,606	8,883	8,883	60,489	60,489	100.0

TABLE I

ATTRITION

Attrition is the separation of military personnel before completion of their obligated tours. This directly impacts our meeting accessions and force level requirements, has a negative affect on military readiness, is costly, and has the potential to adversely affect the personal lives of those separated. For the purpose of this research, attrition is compared for 1971-1973 and 1981-1983 using Basic Military Training (BMT) and Technical Training (TT) discharge percentages in Table II.[3] The author believes the improvement in both BMT and TT percentages can be attributed to a higher level of education, better screening by the Air Force recruiters, and highly trained recruiters and military training instructors.

<u>ATTRITION</u>		
<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>BMT</u>	<u>TT</u>
1971	4.1%	5.3%
1972	7.1%	7.2%
1973	9.1%	5.4%
1981	6.0%	4.9%
1982	6.2%	4.1%
1983	5.1%	3.2%

TABLE II

DESERTION

The Air Force has historically had a very low desertion rate. It has stayed at approximately 0.6 desertions per 1,000 enlisted personnel since the pre-Vietnam (FY 1964) level. [4:51]

RETENTION

The Air Force defines retention as a percentage of re-enlistment based on airmen who were eligible to re-enlist. The re-enlistment rate measures re-enlistment out of the total separation pool, including separations for the purpose of re-enlistment, who are eligible to re-enlist. The Air Force has had a significant increase in first-term re-enlistments, a continual increase in second-termers, and held their own in career retention. Retention of quality airmen is critical as it saves money in training costs and maintains a skilled work force.

The author attributes much of this success to a 25% increase in pay over two years (FY 1981 and 1982), increased educational benefits, high unemployment rates, and strong support of the President, Congress, and the people. A strong swell of patriotism led by the President and the Olympic Games made the people more aware of the men and women in uniform, and the importance and greatness of our nation. This continued support is necessary in order to

retain our skilled work force. Table III [5] shows the retention rates.

PERIOD	FIRST TERM	<u>RETENTION</u>	
		SECOND TERM	CAREER
FISCAL YEAR			
1971	20.3%	71.6%	90.9%
1972	32.6%	78.8%	94.4%
1973	20.4%	72.5%	97.3%
1981	42.9%	71.5%	94.3%
1982	56.7%	80.8%	95.6%
1983	65.6%	83.3%	97.0%

TABLE III

QUALITY

"The quality of enlisted personnel -- that is, their ability to learn and do military jobs well -- is commonly measured by the percentage that have graduated from high school and by their scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test." [6:1-1] Feedback from field commanders also plays a vital role as to force quality. Based on the significant decrease in Category IV accessions on the AFQT, a significant increase in high school graduates, and positive feedback from field commanders, we have the highest quality people in the history of the Air Force.

ARMED FORCES QUALIFICATION TEST PERFORMANCE

The AFQT has been traditionally grouped into five broad categories. Airmen scoring in Categories I and II tend to be above average in trainability; those in Category III, average; those in Category IV, below average; and those in Category V, markedly below average and, under current policy, ineligible for enlistment. Enlistees in the higher AFQT categories are preferred, as training time and associated costs are lower. Also, they are more likely to qualify for specialized training. [7:6] The AFQT between 1971-1973 and 1981-1983 cannot be compared because the test was revised. However, it is very clear that we are showing a steady increase in Category I and II accessions, holding steady in Category III, and significantly decreasing in Category IV accessions. See Table IV.[8]

The author believes these trends can be attributed to a drop in accession requirements, an increase in percentage of high school graduates, increased military compensation, strong recruiting sales force, and restrictions by Congress on the number of Category IV enlistments. Based on a comparison study of the 1980 youth population and non prior service accessions for FY 1981, 96% of Air Force non prior service accessions received AFQT Categories I-III, compared to 69% of the 1980 youth population. The median AFQT score for all FY 1981 enlistees was 67, and 53 for the youth

population. This shows we are getting quality young men and women into the Air Force. [7:21]

ACTIVE DUTY NPS ACCESSIONS
BY MENTAL CATEGORY

CATEGORY	I & II	III	IV
FISCAL YEAR			
1971	40.2%	42.6%	17.1%
1972	42.7%	48.7%	8.6%
1973	43.6%	52.2%	4.2%
1981	38.6%	51.8%	9.6%
1982	39.6%	52.6%	7.8%
1983	44.4%	52.2%	3.4%

TABLE IV

ARMED SERVICES VOCATIONAL APTITUDE BATTERY

The ASVAB scores serve two important purposes in the enlistment process. First, they help determine an individual's eligibility, and second, they are used to establish their qualifications for assignment to specific jobs. The test consists of four parts and yields aptitude composite scores in the areas of mechanical ability, administrative ability, general ability, and electronic ability (M,A,G,E). [7:13] To be eligible to enlist in the Air Force the applicant has to have a General score of 40, and a composite of 135. Table V [2] shows the ASVAB

distributions. Comparison cannot be made, since the tests were different during the time frames being used. The M,A,G,E scores remain constant from 1981 through 1983. Based on the research done in the Profile of American Youth using 1980 as the base year, military accession M,A,G,E scores were slightly higher than the youth population.

[7:41]

<u>ASVAB DISTRIBUTIONS</u>				
<u>MEAN SCORES</u>				
<u>AREAS</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>E</u>
<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>				
1971	58	58	62	61
1972	59	56	62	21
1973	60	52	59	62
1981	55	59	61	60
1982	53	58	60	59
1983	55	61	63	61

TABLE V

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

It is generally accepted that possession of a high school diploma is the best single measure of an individual's potential for adapting to life in the military. A person who does not graduate from high school is twice as likely to leave the military before completing the first three years of service as is a high school graduate. [7:46] The enlistees who do not have a high school diploma tend to have more discipline problems, higher retraining rates, and a higher percentage of early discharges. Table VI [8] shows a significant increase in percentage of high school graduates. Based on The Profile of American Youth research in 1980, 74% of American youth were high school graduates in comparison with non prior service accessions of 88% graduates in FY 1981, 94% in FY 1982, and 98% in FY 1983. [7:25] Presently 99% of our active duty enlisted force has a high school diploma or equivalent. [9:18] This indicates that the Air Force has the highest percentage of high school graduates in its history.

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA GRADUATE
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACTIVE DUTY
NPS ENLISTED ACCESSIONS

FISCAL YEAR	PERCENTAGE
1971	87%
1972	86%
1973	85%
1981	88%
1982	94%
1983	98%

TABLE VI

CHAPTER FOUR

DEMOGRAPHIC MAKE-UP OF THE ALL VOLUNTEER FORCE

General William Westmoreland, Army Chief of Staff, opposed the concept of the AVF and ending the draft. He felt strongly that with increased pay, improving service attractiveness, putting more effort into recruiting programs and improving professionalism, the draft system would work. From a social standpoint he felt the armed forces should represent a cross-section of America from the standpoint of economic status, and ethnic and racial status of our society.[1:123] To see if this has been the case, the author will address representativeness in terms of geographic representation, sex and race.

GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

During the draft years, the Air Force was generally provided a well-balanced number of accessions from all areas of the United States. Each state had a "quota" for inductees based on the state's proportion of the draft-eligible population.[4:40]. Balanced national representation requires the Air Force recruit proportionately from all sections of the United States and not be dependent on one specific area.[9:2]. Table VII [10:20] covers the various recruitment areas. Recruiting Services establishes nonprior accession goals each fiscal

year based on requirements from Air Staff. They then assign monthly goals to their five recruiting groups who in turn assign goals to their squadrons covering areas shown in Table VII. The goal is based on the 17-21-year-old population. Accessions by recruitment area are shown in Tables VIII and IX.[11] The Air Force did extremely well in FY 81, 82, 83 in bringing in a well balanced representation from all five areas in Table IX as all five recruiting groups met or exceeded their assigned goals. The change in accessions from year to year is based solely on force structure requirements and needs established by the Air Staff. In FY 83, Air Force accessions for the ten most populous states was 51.3% compared to 51.5% 17-21-year-old population resource; the second ten states was 21.8% versus 21.6%; the third ten states was 14.3% versus 13.8%; the fourth ten states was 8.3% versus 6.9%; and the ten least populous states and the District of Columbia 4.3% versus 3.2%. The minor state-by-state variations do not represent significant differences in the relationship between accessions and population.[9:4]

RECRUITMENT AREAS

1971-1973

<u>Area One</u>	<u>Area Two</u>	<u>Area Three</u>	<u>Area Four</u>
Maine	New Jersey	North Carolina	Arkansas
New Hampshire	Pennsylvania	South Carolina	Louisiana
Vermont	Delaware	Georgia	Oklahoma
Massachusetts	Maryland	Florida	New Mexico
Connecticut	West Virginia	Alabama	Texas
Rhode Island	Virginia	Mississippi	Arizona
New York	Washington, D.C.	Tennessee	
<u>Area Five</u>	<u>Area Six</u>	<u>Area Seven</u>	<u>Area Eight</u>
Ohio	Washington	Missouri	Others
Illinois	Oregon	Iowa	
Michigan	California	Minnesota	
Indiana	Nevada	No. Dakota	
Kentucky	Idaho	So. Dakota	
	Montana	Kansas	
	Utah	Nebraska	
	Alaska	Colorado	
	Hawaii	Wyoming	
		Wisconsin	

1981-1985

<u>Area One</u>	<u>Area Two</u>	<u>Area Three</u>	<u>Area Four</u>
Maine	Florida	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
New Hampshire	Georgia	Arkansas	Illinois
Vermont	Alabama	Texas	Indiana
Connecticut	North Carolina	Kansas	Michigan
Rhode Island	South Carolina	North Dakota	Ohio
Pennsylvania	Mississippi	South Dakota	
New York	Tennessee	Missouri	
New Jersey	Virginia	Iowa	
Delaware	Washington, D.C.	Minnesota	
Massachusetts	Maryland	Nebraska	
	Kentucky	Louisiana*	
	West Virginia		
	Louisiana		
<u>Area Five</u>			
Arizona	Oregon		
Utah	Idaho		
Wyoming	Montana		
Colorado	Washington		
Nevada	Alaska		
New Mexico	Hawaii		
California			

*Louisiana population is divided at random, 49 percent for Area Two and 51 percent for Area Three

TABLE VII

ACCESSIONS BY RECRUITMENT AREAS

1971-1973

<u>Areas</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
1		12,118	10,380	11,447
2		12,261	9,756	11,073
3		15,534	12,549	14,988
4		10,737	11,321	14,303
5		17,755	14,839	14,818
6		13,244	12,215	14,585
7		11,001	11,430	12,475

TABLE VIII

ACCESSIONS BY RECRUITMENT AREAS

1981-1983

<u>Areas</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
1		15,795	15,585	13,263
2		15,033	14,597	12,776
3		10,548	11,623	9,935
4		13,448	13,726	12,507
5		14,011	11,976	11,862

TABLE IX

FEMALE ACCESSIONS

As the draft era ended, there was an increased emphasis on giving women equal opportunity and employment in the American economy. Prior to Vietnam, use of women as

military personnel was essentially token.[12:171]. In 1971, there were only 1.9 percent [13:110] as compared to 11.1% in FY 1983.[14:16] Table X [8] depicts female accessions. A comparison cannot be made, as Congress mandates the percentage. The educational level of our females has risen significantly as indicated in Table XI.[8] We are assigning them to all career fields except those prohibited by law.

FEMALE ACCESSIONS IN THE AIR FORCE

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>
1971	4,290	.04
1972	4,500	.05
1973	6,172	.07
1981	10,957	14.2
1982	8,745	13.0
1983	8,883	14.7

TABLE X

FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA GRADUATES
PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACTIVE DUTY
NPS ENLISTED ACCESSIONS

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1971	83.0
1972	87.0
1973	89.0
1981	87.9
1982	95.5
1983	98.9

TABLE XI

RACIAL MAKE-UP

Perhaps the single most controversial AVF issue concerns social representation, and the racial composition in particular. It is felt by some that the AVF is placing a disproportionate share of the defense burden on the least advantaged segment of society. It is important to note that the increased minority participation is largely unrelated to the AVF. Rather, the present racial composition of the military is a result of more young Blacks qualifying for the military and the problems they face in the civilian job market. [15:169] Table XII [9:16] shows that the Air Force has remained fairly constant in their accession of Blacks as compared to the U.S. population.

BLACK ACCESSIONS IN THE AIR FORCE

<u>FISCAL YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	<u>U.S.</u> <u>POPULATION</u> <u>17-21</u>
1971	14.5	12.3
1972	12.9	12.4
1973	14.5	12.6
1981	14.1	14.1
1982	15.5	14.2
1983	14.2	14.5

TABLE XII

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of this research were to analyze, assess, and articulate the effects of the All Volunteer Force on Air Force enlisted accessions by comparing those who enlisted in the draft era, 1971-1973, with those in the volunteer era, 1981-1983. Three specific areas for measurement were used: quantity, quality, and demographic make-up.

The Air Force met its quantitative goal each year. We have lowered our attrition, kept desertions low, and significantly improved retention.

Quality of the enlisted accessions is the best in our history. We show improvement in Mental Category I-II and a significant decrease in Category IV. Our enlistees are scoring higher on the AFQT and the ASVAB than their contemporaries who are tested and remain in the civilian sector. Significant improvement occurred in our percentage of high school graduates from an average of 86% in 1971-1973 versus 93.3% in 1981-1983. This far exceeds the 74% rate for the nation as a whole.

Accessions from the various geographic areas have shown minor state-by-state variations. All the Recruiting Groups

are doing an outstanding job in maintaining representativeness throughout the nation.

Female accessions have been significantly higher for 1981-1983 than they were for 1971-1973. This is attributed to increased authorizations by Congress. The female high school graduate percentages have increased significantly from an average of 86.3% for 1971-1973 to 94.1% for 1981-1983.

The Air Force is not becoming racially imbalanced. Our black accessions have remained constant and match favorably the percent eligible in the civilian work force. The Air Force is well represented by demographic areas, sex, and racial make-up.

The significant finding is that the AVF has not adversely affected Air Force enlisted accessions from 1981-1983. In fact, we have shown significant improvement and have the highest quality ever. Secretary of the Air Force, Verne Orr stated "...the Air Force has the best people it's ever had. Morale is very high and, for both officer and enlisted personnel, retention has improved remarkably." [16:10]

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